

FACULTIES OF MATHEMATICS & STATISTICS

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH UNDERGRADUATES

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 1st November 2024 at 12.30pm in N4.01, Mathematical Institute.

Present: Benham Cobb (MURC Mathematics & Statistics Representative), Alessandro Danovaro (MURC Questionnaire Representative), Ben Gould (MURC Fourth Year Representative), Dr Chris Hollings (Faculty Teaching Advisor), Andrew Kangmin Kim (MURC First Year Representative), Dr Neil Laws (Statistics Representative), Ashley Leung (MURC IT Officer), Yizhi Li (MURC Secretary), Josh Mead (MURC Diversity and Inclusion Representative), Akhila Natarajan (MURC Third Year Representative), Prof. James Newton (Chair), Agniv Sarkar (MURC Mathematics & Computer Science Representative), Grace Yongqing Yu (MURC President), Tommy Tianyang Zou (MURC Second Year Representative, MURC Mathematics & Philosophy Representative)

In attendance: Rosalind Mitchell (Secretariat)

Apologies: Lily Yunxuan Bo (MURC Outreach Representative), Dr James Munro (Admissions Group Admissions Co-ordinator),

1. Introductions

The 2024-25 members of the Committee introduced themselves.

2. Meeting held on Friday, 10th May 2024

(a) Minutes

It was noted that the Item 3 minute relating to the new Special Relativity course being introduced in 2025-26 needed to be amended to show that the course is at Part B. The minutes were otherwise approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

(b) Matters arising

(i) Times of future meetings

It was agreed that JCCU meetings would be held at 12.30pm, Friday of Week 3 of each term.

3. Membership of JCCU (*for information*)

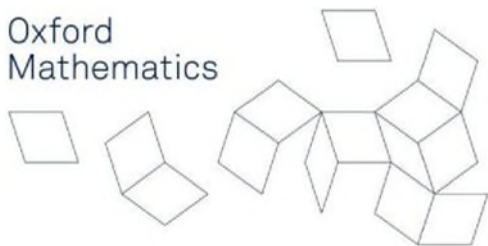
(a) Senior Members

(b) Junior Members

The membership of the Committee was noted.

4. Chair's Business

(a) Exam scaling



The Chair informed the meeting that the testing of the new exam database algorithm had gone well and the Exam Database Working Group thus intended to proceed to use it for future examinations, commencing this academic year.

The Chair noted that it was not possible to speculate on how the Trinity Term 2024 examination results might have turned out should the new algorithm have been used as assessor input and academic judgement had an impact on results and these human factors had not been input during the trial.

The Statistics Representative (SR) highlighted the importance of assessor input, citing the 2024 Part B Mathematics Examination Board as example: the assessors had considered scaling at 3 separate meetings.

(b) Request for feedback on intercollegiate class organisation

The students had found the move to Moodle a positive experience – although it was noted that the move could have been better communicated.

It was noted that tutors didn't always display submission deadlines clearly. It was difficult to find the names and contact details of tutors, TAs/markers.

ACTION: Academic Administration to list groups and associated teaching support on each course page.

Better explanation of how waiting lists worked and whether students could expect to be moved from them requested.

ACTION: Academic Administration to issue clear instructions regarding waiting lists.

5. Report on matters raised in Examiners Report

It was agreed that this item would be moved to the agenda of the Hilary Term 2025 meeting.

6. Reports from the meetings of the Faculty/Teaching/Academic Committees

(a) Mathematics

i. Teaching Committee

The reports were acknowledged; no items were discussed.

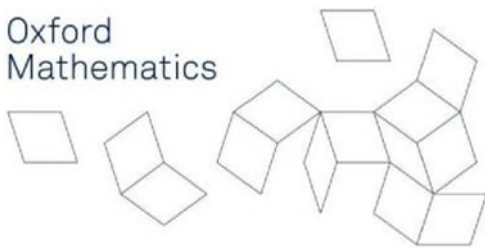
(b) Statistics

i. Teaching Committee

The SR reiterated the Faculty's full support of students in light of the change to the exam entry deadlines. A letter was being sent to the Maths, Physics and Life Sciences' (MPLS) Divisional Education Committee, due to meet in Week 6 this term.

The Chair noted that all MPLS departments were planning to make representations to the MPLS Division.

ACTION: Academic Administration to ensure that the MI issued a student update.



- (c) Items to refer to Faculty/ Teaching/Academic Committees
There were no such items.

7. MURC Business

- (a) Exam scaling
It was agreed that this had been addressed under item 4. Chair's Business
- (b) Organisation of intercollegiate classes
It was agreed that this had addressed under item 4. Chair's Business
- (c) Organisation of Computer Science options for non- Computer Science students
It was noted that Computer Science (CS) took a long time to reply to Part C Mathematics students wishing to take CS options. The SR observed that CS could not be sure of spaces available until CS students had completed their course sign ups.

ACTION: Chair to raise this matter with the Teaching Committee's CS Representative.

- (d) Lecture schedule conflicts
The following conflicts were reported:
- Prelims Introduction to Logic and Introduction to Calculus followed one another yet in different buildings
 - Part A core Maths and core Philosophy courses
 - Part C biology classes

ACTION: Academic Administration to send MURC President draft timetable for review.

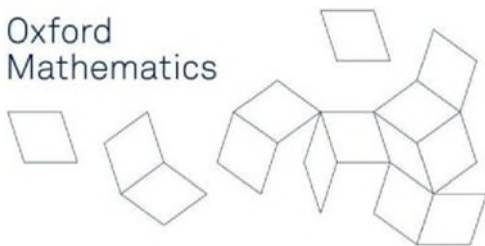
- (e) Exam entry deadlines
It was questioned whether students could sign up for extra options and then drop surplus without being penalised.

ACTION: Chair to investigate and ask Associate Head of Department (Education) (AHOD E) to issue a clarification

The SR and the Chair reiterated that the new exam entry deadline had been imposed upon the departments by central University and recommended that students read the relevant synopses and contact lecturers in order to make a more informed decision. The departments would continue to advocate on behalf of students and Faculty.

- (f) Feedback on dissertations
MURC noted that those choosing dissertations on applied mathematics received a less-preferred choice compared to those opting for a pure mathematics dissertation. The Chair informed the Committee that the relative lack of available applied topics and solutions to this had been discussed at the Week 2 meeting of the Teaching Committee.

It was noted that pure mathematics lacked representation in some areas, such as topology.



It was clarified that supervisors are asked to contact students to arrange meetings, but students are also welcome to get in touch with supervisors proactively.

Earlier allocation of dissertation topics (e.g. at end of 3rd year) was discussed, but this wouldn't be possible because OMMS students need to be involved in the process too.

(g) Lecture scheduling and diversity and inclusion

The Committee was informed that Part A students had indicated a slight preference for morning lectures in the MURC survey. Too few students identifying as neurodivergent had responded to draw conclusive data so no problems could be anticipated.

MURC members commented on the fact that Evison data recorded legal sex which placed constraints on the information received by the MI.

ACTION: Chair to raise at Week 7 Teaching Committee meeting.

(h) Increasing participation in end-of-year questionnaires

MURC suggested the use of a single, course agnostic, questionnaire, with snack and an intercollegiate competition being used as incentives for participation. Displaying the real time number of responses received was discussed. It was noted that making questions optional and giving a response option by which students could indicate that they felt matters were fine as they were would make students more likely to complete a questionnaire.

ACTION: Academic Administration to speak to IT about real time response display.

The Chair thanked MURC for its suggestions.

(i) Part C Mathematics & Statistics students taking Computer Science options

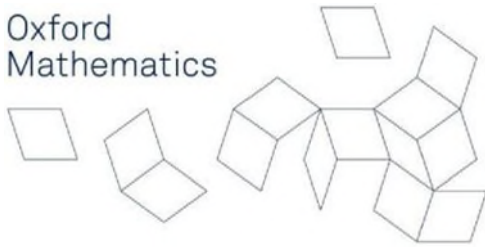
MURC queried the reasoning behind Part Maths & Stats students not being able to take CS options. The SR replied that CS would be happy for Maths & Stats students to take up to 2 CS options, however, CS courses were often very full. The SR noted that overlap between CS and Stats courses also had to be considered. The MURC President opined that there was not much overlap at Part C.

ACTION: SR to investigate and take a list of appropriate CS courses to the next meeting of the Statistics Teaching Committee.

(j) Part C Mathematics and Statistics students offering Mathematical dissertations

MURC queried whether current requirements could be relaxed to allow students more options. The SR observed that the Mathematics & Statistics degree needed to be distinct from the Mathematics degree: the first 2 years of the Maths & Stats degree were mainly Maths and thus it was important for the second 2 years to have a Stats element. It was noted that Maths & Stats students would likely wish to take applied dissertation topics and numbers of these were already under pressure by Mathematics students.

(k) Plug sockets in the south mezzanine



Academic administration had investigated and the use of the sockets was not permitted on Health & Safety grounds.

MURC suggested that portable chargers could be made available, with students handing over their University cards in exchange for a charger.

ACTION: Academic Administration to investigate portable charger scheme.

8. Questionnaires

To be discussed at Hilary Term meeting.

9. Open Days in 2024-25

Students were invited to contact Dr James Munro if they were able to help.

10. AOB

There was no other business.